WINCHESTER NEWS
A TRUSTED AND RELIABLE SOURCE OF LOCAL NEWS

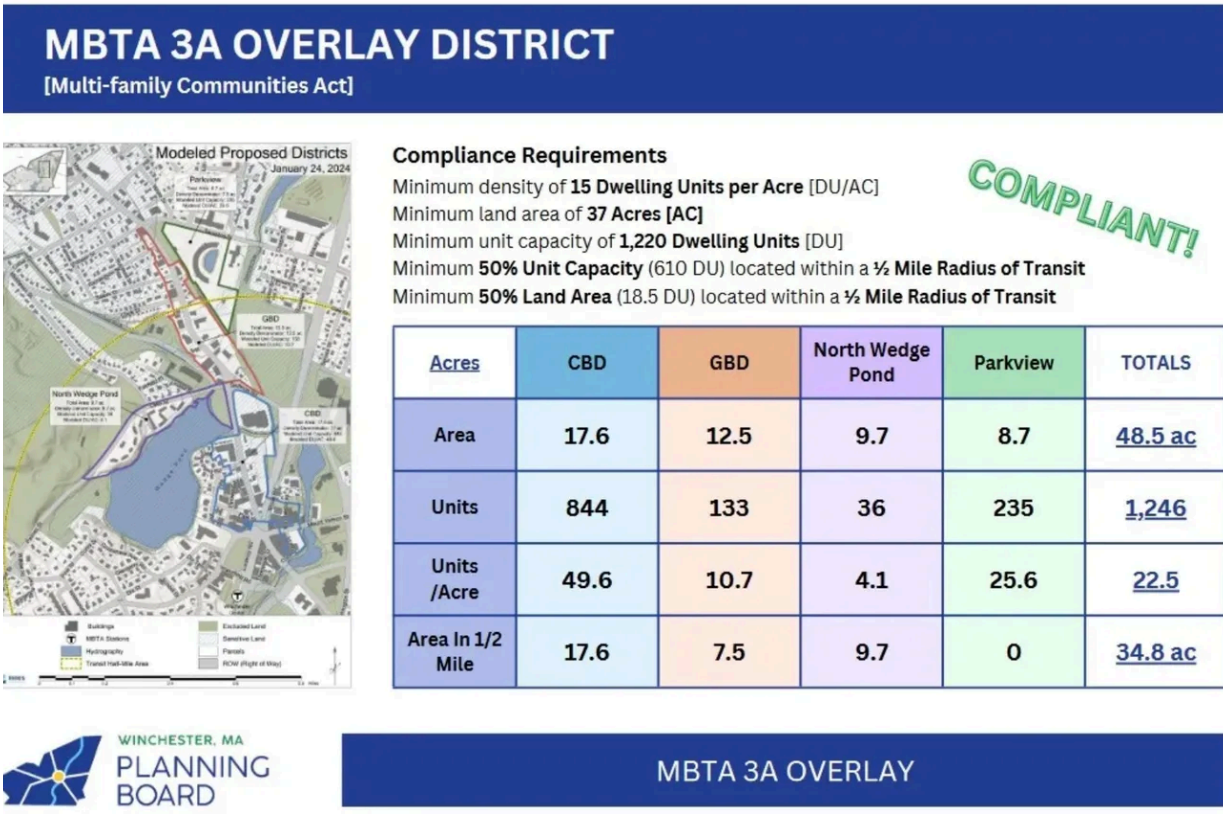


NEWS

# Winchester Town Meeting to vote on updated MBTA Overlay District, boosting affordable housing

AAYUSHI DATTA | CORRESPONDENT

November 2, 2025 . 6:00 AM — 3 min read


MBTA 3A OVERLAY DISTRICT
[Multi-family Communities Act]
Modeled Proposed Districts
January 24, 2024
Compliance Requirements
Minimum density of 15 Dwelling Units per Acre [DU/AC]
Minimum land area of 37 Acres [AC]
Minimum unit capacity of 1,220 Dwelling Units [DU]
Minimum 50% Unit Capacity (610 DU) located within a ½ Mile Radius of Transit
Minimum 50% Land Area (18.5 DU) located within a ½ Mile Radius of Transit
COMPLIANT!
Acres | CBD | GBD | North Wedge Pond | Parkview | TOTALS
Area | 17.6 | 12.5 | 9.7 | 8.7 | 48.5 ac
Units | 844 | 133 | 36 | 235 | 1,246
Units /Acre | 49.6 | 10.7 | 4.1 | 25.6 | 22.5
Area In 1/2 Mile | 17.6 | 7.5 | 9.7 | 0 | 34.8 ac
WINCHESTER, MA PLANNING BOARD
MBTA 3A OVERLAY

A look at the MBTA 3A Overlay District in Winchester, which was approved by Town Meeting in April 2024. Town Meeting will vote this fall to update the current zoning. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER PLANNING BOARD

Town Meeting members will vote on an amendment to the town [Overlay District] that would bring affordable housing standards in line with

Subscribe

the rest of Winchester while maintaining state compliance.

Article 4, proposed by the Planning Board, would update the MBTA Overlay District — a zoning area that allows multifamily housing near public transit. The change would align the overlay's affordable housing rules with those already in place with the two underlying zoning districts, the Center Business District and the Main Street Mixed-Use District.

Under the current MBTA overlay rules, projects of 10 units or more must designate 10% of their homes as affordable. When that 10% results in a decimal, the number is rounded down.

"So by example, if you have 19 units, you're developing 10% of 19, [affordable housing would] be 1.9 units, and that would round down to one unit," said Planning Board Chair Brian Vernaglia.

Article 4 would change the rounding method so that any fractional unit rounds up instead. So 1.9 units would round up to 2 affordable units. The proposal also lowers the threshold for when affordable housing requirements apply, from 10 units to six, again aligning it with neighboring districts.

The MBTA Communities Act, a state law passed in 2021, requires towns with access to MBTA service to create zones that allow multifamily housing near public transit. Winchester approved its overlay district in spring 2024, covering about 48 acres within a half-mile of the town's MBTA station.

The town in August 2024 received a letter from the Attorney General's Office confirming Winchester's overlay district as being in compliance.

Both the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office have confirmed that if t

Subscribe

amendment passes, Winchester will remain in full compliance with the state law, Vernaglia said.

“A fairly simple amendment to our compliance,” said Town Planner Taylor Herman.

Herman said one of the original requirements for the compliance was to submit an economic feasibility analysis, completed in June 2025. The study cost $7,500, out of the $15,000 allocated at a prior Town Meeting. The town had to work with an outside consultant to prove to the state what the inclusionary housing number could be.

I-ching Scott, a Winchester resident and member of the Housing Partnership Board, said Article 4 balances adding affordable units to meet SHI goals with requirements that are reasonable for developers.

“My concern as a resident of Winchester is that long-term folks cannot afford to move into something within town,” Scott said. “So encouraging development near town would be great for those right-sizing.”

The change could help Winchester move closer to its state-mandated goal of having 10% of its housing stock qualify as affordable, Scott said.

“We’re just a little bit shy of 5% right now, and we just really backlogged getting that going,” she said

Vernaglia said the zoning will not change that number substantially and that the proposal has faced little pushback.

“This is a very small change,” he said. “We’ve received unanimous favorable action from the Select Board, the Housing Partnership Board, and the Affordable Housing Trust in favor of this article.”

Subscribe

While the original MBTA zoning law was “challenging and controversial” statewide, Herman said, this amendment simply fine-tunes what Winchester already passed.

“The biggest thing is that it doesn’t disrupt our compliance,” he said. “It just makes our rules consistent.”

If approved, the amendment will go to the Attorney General’s Office for review before being added to the town’s bylaws.

For residents like Scott, that would mark progress — not a dramatic shift, but a meaningful one.

“It’s a really positive step for our town,” she said. “I hope Town Meeting members will vote yes.”

*Aayushi Datta is a journalism student at Boston University. This story is part of a partnership between Winchester News and the Boston University Department of Journalism.*

Winchester News is a non-profit organization supported by our community. If you appreciate having local Winchester news, please donate to support our work, and subscribe to our free weekly newsletter. Copyright 2025 Winchester News Group, Inc. Copying and sharing with written permission only.

## Related

Subscribe

NEWS

## Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

NEWS

## Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

NEWS

## Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

NEWS

## Winchester Select Board approves overnight parking pil fees increased

Subscribe

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

March 3, 2026

The Winchester Select Board on Feb. 23 approved an overnight parking pilot, raised building permit fees for the first time since 2021, adopted the 2026 outdoor dining policy and directed the town manager to examine reinvesting downtown-generated revenue into town center improvements. The board voted unanimously to implement the overnight

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 3, 2026

# Latest

FEATURES

## ‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026

EVENTS

## Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

Subscribe

NEWS

## Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

NEWS

## Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

WINCHESTER NEWS
A TRUSTED AND RELIABLE SOURCE OF LOCAL NEWS

Subscribe to Winchester News

Subscribe

© 2026 Winchester News Group, Inc. Copying and sharing with permission for non-commercial use only.

Subscribe